NUMB. CCCLVIII.

The SPECTATOR.

Deſipere in loco. Hor.

Monday, April 21. 1712.

Charles Lillie attended me the other Day, and made me a Preſent of a large Sheet of Paper, on which is delineated a Pavement in Moſaick Work, lately diſcovered at near *Woodſtock*. A Perſon who has ſo great Gift of Speech as Mr. *Lillie*, and can carry Diſcourſe without Reply, had great Opportunity that Occaſion to expatiate upon ſo great Piece of Antiquity. Among other things, I remember he gave me his Opinion, which he drew from the Ornaments of the Work, That this was the Floor of a Room dedicated to Mirth and Concord. Upon viewing this Work, made my Fancy run over many gay Expreſſions I had read in ancient Authors, which contained Invitations to lay aſide all Anxiety, and give a Looſe to that pleaſing Carelaneſs wherein Men put off their Characters of Buſineſs, and enjoy their very Selves. Theſe Entertainments were uſually paſſed in Rooms adorned for that Purpoſe, and ſet out in ſuch a Manner, as the Eye of all around the Company gladdened their Hearts; which, joined to the chearful Looks of Friends and agreeable Friends, gave new Vigour to the Air, produced the latent Fire of the Eyes, and gave Grace to the ſlow Humour of the Dull. A judicious Mixture of ſuch Company, Crowned with Chaplets of Flowers, and the whole Room glittering with gay Lights, cheared with Baſkets of Roſes, artificial Falls of Water, and Harmony of ſoft Notes, to Songs of Love and Wine, ſuſpended the Cares of humane Life, and roſe into a Feſtival of mutual Kindneſs. Such Parties of Pleaſure as theſe, and the Reports of the agreeable Things in their Jollities, have in all Ages animated the dull Part of Mankind, to pretend to Wit and good Humour without Capacity for Converſation or Entertainments; for if I may be allowed to ſay ſo, there are an hundred Men fit for Buſineſs or Employment, to one who is capable of Converſation. Night in Company of the firſt Taſte, without offending any Member of the Society, overlooking his own Part of the Converſation, but by obſerving and contributing to the Pleaſure of the whole Company. When one conſiders ſuch Aſſemblies, and the Collections of Companions in paſt Times, and ſuch as one might name in the preſent Age, with how much Spleen muſt a Man needs reflect upon the awkard Gayety of thoſe who affect the Frolick with an ill Grace? I have a Letter from a Correſpondent of mine, who deſires me to admoniſh all loud, miſchievous, airy, dull Companions, that they are miſtaken in what they call a Frolick. Irregularity in its ſelf is not what creates Pleaſure and Mirth; but to ſee a Man who knows what Rule and Decency are, deſcend from them agreeably in our Company, is what denominates him a pleaſant Companion. Inſtead of that, you find many whoſe Mirth conſiſts only in doing things which do not become them, with a ſecret Conſciouſneſs that all the World know they know better: To this is always added ſomething miſchievous to themſelves or others. I have heard of ſome very merry Fellows, among whom the Frolick was ſtarted, and paſſed by a great Majority, that every Man ſhould immediately draw a Tooth; after which they have gone in a Body and ſmoaked a Cobler. The ſame Company, at another Night, has each Man burned his Cravat; and one perhaps, whoſe Eſtate would bear it, has thrown a long Wigg and laced Hat into the ſame Fire. Thus they have jeſted themſelves ſtark naked, and ran into the Streets, and frighted Women very ſucceſsfully. There is no Inhabitant of any ſtanding in *Covent-Garden*, but can tell you a hundred good Humours, where People have come off with little Blood-ſhed, and yet ſcowered all the witty Hours of the Night. I know a Gentleman that has ſeveral Wounds in the Head by Watch-Poles, and has been thrice run through the Body to carry on a good Jeſt: He is very old for a Man of ſo much good Humour; but to this Day he is ſeldom merry, but he has occaſion to be valiant at the ſame time. But by the Favour of theſe Gentlemen, I am humbly of Opinion, that a Man may be a very witty Man, and never offend one Statute of this Kingdom, not excepting even that of Stabbing.

The Writers of Plays have what they call Unity of Time and Place to give a Juſtneſs to their Repreſentation;

preſentation; and it would not be amiſs if all who pretend to be Companions, would confine their Action to the Place of Meeting: For a Frolick carried further may be better performed by other Animals than Men. It is not to rid much Ground, or do much Miſchief, that ſhould denominate a pleaſant Fellow; but that is truly Frolick which is the Play of the Mind, and conſiſts of various and unforced Sallies of Imagination. Feſtivity of Spirit is a very uncommon Talent, and muſt proceed from an Aſſemblage of agreeable Qualities in the ſame Perſon: There are ſome few whom I think peculiarly happy in it; but it is a Talent one cannot name in a Man, eſpecially when one conſiders that it is never very graceful but where it is regarded by him who poſſeſſes it in the ſecond Place. The beſt Man that I know of for heightening the Revel-Gayety of a Company is *Eſtcourt*, whoſe jovial Humour diffuſes it ſelf from the higheſt Perſon at an Entertainment to the meaneſt Waiter. Merry Tales, accompanied with apt Geſtures and lively Repreſentations of Circumſtances and Perſons, beguile the graveſt Mind into a Conſent to be as humourous as himſelf. Add to this, that when a Man is in his good Graces, he has a Mimickry that does not debaſe the Perſon he repreſents; but which, taking from the Gravity of the Character, adds to the Agreeableneſs of it. This pleaſant Fellow gives one ſome Idea of the antient *Pantomime*, who is ſaid to have given the Audience, in Dumb-ſhow, an exact Idea of any Character or Paſſion, or make an intelligible Relation of any publick Occurrence with no other Expreſſion than that of his Looks and Geſtures. If all who have been obliged to theſe Talents in *Eſtcourt*, will be at *Love for Love to-Morrow Night*, they will but pay him what they owe him, at ſo eaſy a Rate as being preſent at a Play which no Body would omit ſeeing that had, or had not ever ſeen it before.

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